



# The Garland

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HIGH overhead a white cloud floated in the piercing sapphire sky, and the slim leaves of olive trees rustled gently in the breeze. The air was perfumed with the scent of flowers; scarlet, rose and golden, growing in profusion along the banks of the river in the valley of Sorak. Somewhere a dove cooed softly, and the treble shout of a boatman drifted over the water, clear and musical. Delilah twisted a blade of grass between her fingers and sighed.

"Samson," she said, "Samson, cut your hair." The bronzed giant beside her blinked his eyes, and the thick lashes cast curving shadows on his cheeks. "Can't," he said.

She ran her fingers through the dark curls and frowned. "Why not?"

"I like it this way. Besides, I've always worn it so."

"Cut it just to please me." She placed a flower behind his ear, and studied the effect.

He laughed, and his laughter roared and echoed, reaching for the hills. Why?"

"Because it's tangled so that no comb could ever smooth it, and its seven locks look quite like snakes, twining all together."

"Ummmmph." Samson grunted. "Snakes or tangles, still I like it."

"But it spoiled my finest piece of cloth, when I wove it in my web!"

"So," he said, "I'll buy you still another, colored like the wings of dragonflies."

"No," she said. "First cut your hair, and then I'll weave a robe of golden thread for you alone."

"I wouldn't cut it for a jewelled crown, or for all the riches of a kingdom."

"Please?" she said, her great dark eyes pleading, filled with unspilled tears. "You'd be so handsome and so strong that every man in Israel or Philistia would hold you up to envy."

"They do already," said Samson, "because I have you, Delilah."

"Humph!" She turned away. "You couldn't really love me, because you won't do anything to please me."

"No," he said, "I merely slay the Philistians when they annoy you, and slaughter lions with my hands for your amusement."

She tossed her head, and the blue-black waves of her hair glistened in the sunlight. "But that's so very simple for you. You're the strongest man in all the world, killing armies with the jawbone of an ass, while others swat at flies with much more effort."

Samson sat up and gazed at her, unsmiling. "My strength," he said, "was not my doing. I'm innocent of it."

She clutched his hand, her fingers soft as lily-petals, and smiled at him. "Then tell me why you have it! Why are you so strong, and others weak?"

He stared at the river, seeing its silver ripples curling in the sunlight, waving like Delilah's hair. "Three times," he said, "you've asked me, and three times I've told you lies. This time I shall not answer."

She frowned, and her crimson lips twisted sadly, like the blossoms of some dying flower. "I'll never know," she said. "And I shall perish from my curiosity."

Samson smiled at her. "I truly doubt it, for I shall do all in my power to please you."

"You will?" She gazed at him, astonished. "Then cut your hair. One tiny lock, then more and more, until it stands about your head like a halo made of ebony!"

"Can't," he said. "It's my one vanity."

"And my one despair. Some day I'll cut it for you, and you'll never know I'm doing it at all. I'll braid it in a circle, and wear it on my arm."

He sighed and pillowed his head on his arms, stretching out upon the grass. "Until that day," he said, "I'll sleep in peace."

DELILAH looked at him, her great eyes wide, and listened to his steady breathing. She smiled, and then laughed softly, pulling a silver razor from the band about her waist.

"Samson," she whispered, "Samson, you shall be handsome as all the gods of Philistia."

She wound the seven locks about her fingers, one by one, and cut them carefully and silently, working with the shining little blade. He stirred and sighed, and she filled her hands with curls and tossed them in the sparkling river where they floated, dark against the golden ripples.

"You will be pleased with me," she murmured, "when you waken, for you shall have a crown of flowers, and be the king to Queen Delilah."

She wove a garland of blood-red blossoms and placed it on his head, then stiffened suddenly. A face was staring at her from among the waxy olive leaves.

"Samson!" she cried, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"

He stumbled to his feet and stared around him. "Where?"

She pointed, trembling. "There, among the trees!"

He ran towards them . . . and fell before he reached them, clutching at his short black curls. The soldiers laughed, and ringed him in with spears and axes, fiery in the noon-high sun.

His dark eyes scanned the crowd and found Delilah, staring at him. "My hair," he cried, "did you . . . ?"

She backed away. "I cut it with my razor . . . while you slept."

He bowed his head and turned, the crimson flowers falling to the ground. "And with my hair," he said, "my strength is gone." The soldiers prodded him along the path, as somewhere a boatman called on the river of Sorak, plaintive, now, and searching.

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE...

The University of Oregon has no literary magazine. Many have felt a need for some media through which student writers could be read—in print.

The Oregon Daily Emerald agrees that such a magazine has a place on this campus. So we are experimenting in the field with this literary supplement.

The work is not professional. No one would be more ready to tell you that than S. N. Karchmer, instructor in English, whom we thank for providing us with some of the better work from his short story classes and W. F. Feeney, instructor in English, to whom we are indebted for the poetry.

But it is student work.

We hope you will enjoy it.—EDITOR.